



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Dec. 23, 2015

**Contact:**

Phil Pitchford

Communications Officer

951-826-5975

[ppitchford@riversideca.gov](mailto:ppitchford@riversideca.gov)

## **Riverside Festival of Lights Named Best Holiday Festival by USA Today/10Best**

*Recognition Comes One Year After Festival Garnered Praise as Best Public Lights Display*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – It's official: Riverside is the place to be during the holidays.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Festival of Lights has been named "Best Holiday Festival" by USA Today/10Best.com. The honor comes one year after the event centered around the 4 million twinkling lights at the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa was named "Best Public Lights Display" by the same publication.

"The rest of the country is learning what Riversiders have known for years: downtown Riverside is a great place to spend the holiday season," Mayor Rusty Bailey said. "From the lights at the historic Mission Inn to the food, crafts, ice skating and other attractions spread across several city blocks, Riverside's Festival of Lights offers something for everyone."

The Reader's Choice recognition follows weeks of voting by communities around the country. 10Best picked 20 nominees, and the top 10 winners were determined by online voting. Winners will be featured in upcoming online and print editions of USA Today, on [www.10Best.com](http://www.10Best.com) and in promotional materials.

Riverside's Festival of Lights took the "Best Holiday Festival" title by edging out San Francisco's Great Dickens Christmas Fair, which transports attendees back to the London of author Charles Dickens. Other competitors included Charleston, S.C., San Diego, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and Chicago.

A full list of finalists can be found at: <http://www.10best.com/awards/travel/best-holiday-festival/>

The Festival of Lights kicks off every year the day after Thanksgiving with a countdown ceremony and a spectacular fireworks display attended by an estimated 75,000 people. Throngs of Festival-goers begin packing downtown streets during the afternoon to get good seats for the switch-on ceremony, which typically culminates with the lights being turned on and the fireworks at about 5:30 p.m.

The Festival of Lights continues daily through the holidays, culminating this season on Jan. 2, 2016. The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa is decorated with 4 million holiday lights and hundreds of animatronic figures, creating a holiday wonderland that draws visitors from all over Southern California.

Festival-goers each have their favorite places to go for winter fun and treats on the Main Street pedestrian mall and beyond, including the ice skating rink, the legendary mini-donut stand, the hot chocolate vendors and the opportunity to take a photo with Santa Claus. Horse-drawn carriages brightly decorated with holiday lights ferry visitors around downtown streets. Dozens of community groups pitch in to provide entertainment.

More information about the Festival of Lights can be found at [www.RiversideFestivalofLights.com](http://www.RiversideFestivalofLights.com) and video footage of the Festival is available on request. Visitors often tweet with #RiversideFOL, and the Festival can be found on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/riversidefestivaloflights/?fref=ts>